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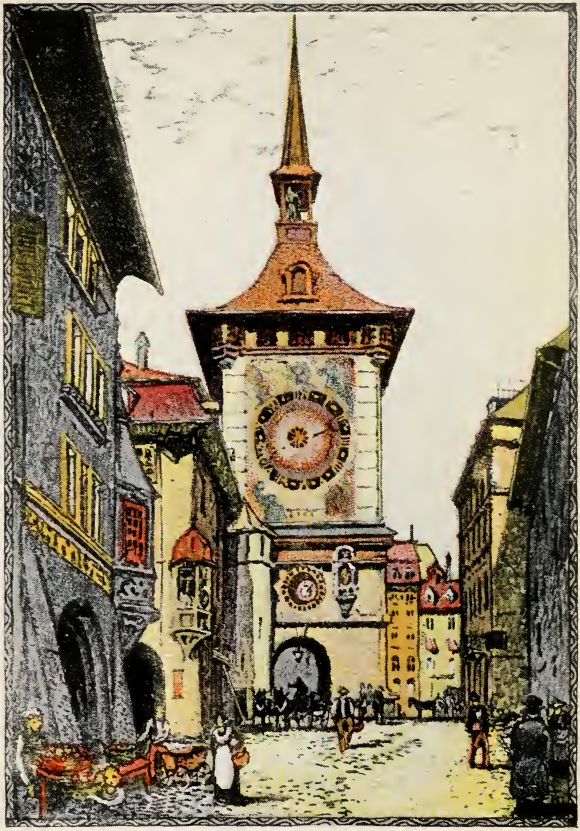

The Zeitglockenturm

MAX

A Midnight Adventure

By

ANNIE W. FRANCHOT

Author of "Bugs and Wings and Other Things"

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEW YORK

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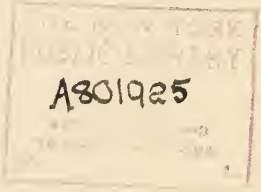

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TO

THE CHILDREN, YOUNG AND OLD
WHO BELIEVE IN FAIRIES

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE STORY
OF THE ADVENTURES OF
MAX

There may be one to scoff and say,
"It is not true—
There are no Elves or Fay."
Then bid him go
To the deep green wood
Where rippling waters flow—
You know the place I trow—
Where moonbeams winnow
Through tall fir trees
And fireflies flash their lanterns bright.

There in the witchery
And wonder of night
He will hear the flutter of Fairies' wings
And all the voices of insect things.
Then, if you listen, you will hear him say,
"'Tis true! They live—the Elves and Fay."

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MAX

Chapter One

"Please stand up, all who believe in Fairies"
—PETER PAN

ONCE upon a time—in the beautiful old city of Bern in Switzerland, there was a midnight adventure of which I will tell. I heard it from the man-in-the-moon, he and Count von Zähringer were the only ones who seemed to know anything about it.

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"

It happened one night in August, not the first of August, for then, of course, every one would be awake.

The man-in-the-moon watched over the sleeping City.

Max, jolly little Max, the bell-ringer, who lived on the *Zeitglockenturm*, lifted his arms and struck the bells for the coming midnight hour just as he had done for hundreds of years.

The Cock below him crowed cheerfully just as he had crowed for hundreds of years.

The little brown bears made their procession just as they had paraded in the circle for hundreds of years.

Old Father Time raised his hour glass and moved his

distaff leisurely in rhythm.

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"

The little bear at the left looked first this way and then that to see if all were well. The strong, big man in armour high up in the belfry struck the great bell with heavy blows in answer to Max's ringing, saying to the sleeping City:

"Midnight is passed
And all is well."

It was very still after the echoes of the bells had left the streets never to come back.

But hark! what is it stealing up the quiet street? Is it the

breath of Gargantus hovering over the valley? Ah, no, not the breath of the giant—but the pattering of soft little feet as down from the mountain-side rolling and tumbling—hurrying swiftly past the *Bärengraben*—over the *Nydeck* bridge—up the *Kramgasse*—climbing up the sides of the houses — peeping mischievously in at the windows—dodging under the *Lauben*—scampering here and there—came a company of odd little men—the Elves from the mountains. The patter of their little feet was like the falling of Autumn leaves and

their laughter as soft as the flutter of butterfly wings.

* * * *

In a room in one of the houses over the arcaded street Peter Schweitzer raised his night-capped head and opening one sleepy eye said to his wife, "My dear, I hear music, I feel it, I do." "Nay, nay, Peter; you are dreaming—it is but a little draught of wind; put down your head and go to sleep."

* * * *

On, on up the *Kramgasse* pattered the swift, flying feet

of the little men until they came to the *Zeitglockenturm* —the old Tower that hundreds of years ago was one of the City gates—here the Elves stopped and stood looking up at the great round face of the old clock—their feet were braced far apart to keep them from falling backward on their heads.

The half hour struck—and again all was still—the little men below called softly to the bell-ringer — "Max, Max, come down and away with us to your old home in the mountains just for tonight—The

Fairies and Elves are waiting for you—the City sleeps, Max, no one needs to know the hours 'till day breaks."

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"

The man in the moon
Winked one eye
At the evening star near by—

"Yes, yes," said the Cock,
"You must go—
I, the hours will loudly crow
And though you *are* quite far away
You shall hear at break of day,
My Cock-a-doodle doo."

One little fellow who seemed to be a leader called, "Hurry, Max, hurry — Old Father Time is pointing to his Hour-glass. As time is marked by mortal men, it is hundreds of years since you left us to come here and perch upon the Tower so high to ring the bells of time each day, that men might know when to work and when to play. *Now* the time has come for *you* to take a holiday."

"Holinight I should say," crowed the Cock.

"There is a very important meeting in the mountains

tonight," continued the little speaker, "and that is why we have come for you, Max—you must go with us—once more, will you not come?" anxiously the Elf asked.

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"

"I come," Max shouted softly, and with a spring he rose to his feet, but alas he quickly sat him down again.

When one has sat in one position for several centuries, one does not so easily jump and spring, so Max sat down —sat down hard and wagged his sorry little head.

"Alack-a-day!" said the Elves,

"this will never do"—so up the sides of the *Zeitglockenturm* climbed the little men until they reached Max's side, then one took one joint and one took another—one rubbed one muscle—one rubbed another—after much pulling, rubbing, groaning and stretching, Max was as strong and fit as a *Niggeler* and ready to run with the rest.

Down the sides they all came, rolling and sliding to the street below.

"Not that way, Max," as he turned to the north—"the

Kindlifresser will catch you if you don't watch out."

Max laughed a jolly laugh, "Nay, nay, he eats only young boys, I am too old."

"You may be old, Max, but you look very young and tempting, so come this way."

Turning to the South they were off—scampering over the cobbles of the quiet streets.

As they ran through the *Münsterplatz*, where the Moses fountain stands, Max spied

the law-giver with his commandments and he cried, "Oh, what will Moses say!" but Moses only looked wise and pretended not to see that Max had run away for a holiday.

Next they came to the Münster Terrace and there stood the big man who was the founder of the beautiful City of Bern and Max trembled in his little pointed boots. Why should he run away for a holiday when this fine man, Count Berchtold von Zähringer stood at his task all the time? "However," Max said

under his breath, "Perhaps he too runs away for a holiday some time, *vielleicht!*"

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"

Max was lagging a bit behind; he was a little afraid of the big man. The Elves came to him and took his hands, saying, "Von Zähringer can't hurt you Max, he's petrified in bronze." So they pulled the little fellow along and a big jump and tumble they took over the high wall of the terrace down to the street below. Scurrying and hurrying they ran along. As they crossed the *Kirchenfeld* bridge and Max saw again after all

the years, the beautiful blue-green waters of the Aar rushing so swiftly by, he doffed his jacket to take a swim, but his companions caught him again and hurried him on, laughing as they ran. "There is no time, Max, my boy, for swimming to-night — there are more important things waiting in the mountains for you." So on Max went with only one longing glance back at the water.

Up the steep mountain sides the little men climbed. They needed no stocks or spikes, their feet were sure. Max

tried very hard to follow apace, but his poor crooked little legs grew weary and stiff and he cried: "Oh, boys, my legs are queer, I cannot keep up with you." Then the kindly little Elves, never halting, caught Max in their arms and carried him on their shoulders until they reached the mountain top where a soft green carpet was spread, and the Fir trees raised their pointed tops like sentinels on guard. Here the Elves seated Max on a moss-covered rock and grouped themselves all around.

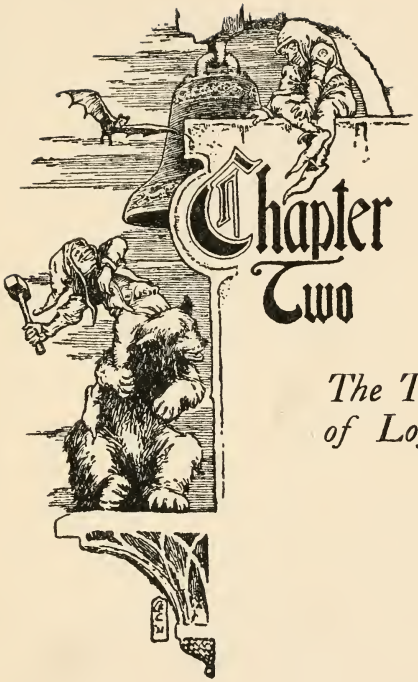
"How wonderful! How glorious to be on your mountain tops again!" was all that happy Max could say.

The Elves were so delighted to have really got Max to the mountains that they rested for a while contentedly. They were pleased when they heard Max say: "After sitting for hundreds of years looking down on a dusty street below with streams of mortals ever passing to and fro, dear friends, this seems like paradise regained."

The little men all sat quietly, happy and expectant.

The man-in-the-moon
Said to the near-by star,
"Don't mention Paradise
so soon."

"Stand Up, All Who believe in Fairies"



Chapter Two

The Tower of Loyalty

THERE was a sound as of zephyrs blowing across the strings of a harp and through the Fir trees with softly fluttering wings came a bevy of exquisite Fairies with golden hair and rosy cheeks and robes of purest white. Max ran to greet them, for he knew they were his friends of long ago, the Fairies of his *Heimatland*—great was his joy to see them again. They all sat down on the soft green moss and chatted of sports and pranks, of pixies and princesses, goblins and giants of centuries gone by. Max

grew younger every hour in the companionship so dear.

A sound was heard like the falling of thistle-down and all exclaimed: "What's here?" The man-in-the-moon exclaimed, "Ah, ha!" Down the slanting moonbeams came a group of Fairies—more exquisite were never seen. The home Fairies, Max and the Elves sprang up to greet their guests and brought soft toadstools to seat them. This was a wonderful surprise and Max's happiness was so great he could not for a moment speak, his little face was ra-

diant in the moonlight.

The Tower of Loyalty

One little Elf—the spokesman—stood up on a tall mushroom and said: "Dear Fairies from other lands, we welcome you tonight! We have brought Max the bell-ringer of the *Zeitglockenturm* to our meeting here, as he is one of us, although he has been absent a very long time.

"You must have received our wireless message and know that we, the little people of the Alps, want to build a Tower to show our love and loyalty to Switzerland. For

centuries we have enjoyed (without taxation) the liberty and beauty of our beloved *Heimatland* and so we would build on this high mountain-top a tower so high that all who have the eyes of faith may see our monument of loyalty. Now, dear Fairies from far away, will you tell us what you have to say?"

As the Elf finished speaking, he went to the nearest Fairy and gallantly led her to the centre of the circle.

With fluttering wings and sparkling eyes the Fairy—

dressed in the latest mode—replied, her voice so sweetly modulated:

"Through the mountain passes of the Alps I have come,"—She stopped to flick a bit of snow from off her wing, — "my friends most dear, to bring to you from our fair land of France our gift, of Courage—Grace, Love and Loyalty, too."

Gracefully the pretty Fairy bowed and took her place near Max while the clapping of the tiny hands of Fairies made sweetest music of appreciation.

Next came a Fairy, tiny and dark, with hair like a raven's wing.

With folded wings and hands clasped tight, and soft dark eyes in modesty downcast, she said:

"I bring, dear Fairy friends,
From far away Japan,
Tranquility and Peace."

Max's curiosity got the better of his good manners as he said: "But tell me how can it be that you so small, so frail, could be carried over the great broad sea?"

The Fairy smiled mysteriously and said, slowly shaking her pretty head:

The Tower of Loyalty

"Ah, friend, can you understand,
The fluttering of a million fans
Bore me over sea and land."

Exclamations of "A million fans! How wonderful!" from all the fairies and the elves.

Then came to the circle on the carpet green a Fairy as beautiful as ever was seen—as tall and strong as a fairy might be—her head held

high, her wings outspread. In a voice, rarely sweet, she said:

"I have brought, don't you know, dear friends, from an island far away—across a channel deep and wide, whose waves dash high against the tide, an offering from old England for your Tower. *Strength*, I bring, for your foundation stone and we pray that nothing may mar the peace and beauty of your Tower."

This touched the hearts of all Helvetia's fairies and loudly

they clapped their tiny hands and sweet the music rose.

The Tower of Loyalty

When all was still again, a Fairy, small and wise, with eyes of black, half closed, and smiling lips of deep red rose, stood in her place and spoke. Her robe was made of cloth of gold, studded with jewels bright, her wings were wrought of silvery gauze dazzling in the pale moonlight. This little Fairy could not walk, her feet were so very small. So the Elves—so quick in gallantry—lifted the fairy small to a place on the carpet green.

Clasping her hands in close embrace the Fairy raised them twice and bowed to the Elves and Fairies in the circle round, then, in a low, sweet voice she said: "I have come from China, centuries old, and have brought for your building, wealth untold—a gift of *knowledge* from Sages old, for without knowledge you cannot build a Tower of wood or stone."

Max again unmindful, (be patient and remember how long the little fellow had been out of society) said:

"Oh, tell me, Fairy, how did you come so far?"

Smiling and closing her eyes aslant, the Fairy said:

"In a box of tea
I sailed the sea
To come to you tonight."

Evidently this mode of travelling quite appealed to her hosts, for they clapped and laughed right heartily. When the little Chinese maiden was carefully carried back to her toad-stool, another fairy rose and with sweet dignity she stood, her eyes were as blue

as the sky above and her hair hung down in braids of gold, her wings were poised as if ready for flight, but her mind never wavered from the message she brought:

"I have come from your border land to-night. My sisters from the great Black Forest have sent a gift most wondrous wise,—of *Science* without which your Tower might topple and fall or else might never be built at all. But the fairies also have sent music to make all happy and glad." Bowing low the Fairy laid a box of wondrous work-

manship and size at the Swiss Elves' and Fairies' side, then lifting her beautiful wings she flew back to her place the other guests beside.

The Elves and Fairies clapped as pleased as pleased could be as they thanked the Fairy fair —then turned to see who the next would be—when, what to their surprise, they saw four little Pixies from the Emerald Isle a-dancing on the green—dancing as light as thistle down, laughing and drawing their mouths askew they said in Irish brogue:

"We came from Dublin
town to-night.
We couldn't have read your
wireless right
For we thought you needed
men to *fight*
While in faith 'tis all we see
in sight
Loyalty and *peace* you
want—not might,
So, back to our bogs, we
boys we go
For in Ireland we're needed
to fight you know."

So, lighting their pipes, away they danced to their Emerald Isle so fair.

When from this turbulent visit the Fairies and Elves recovered their poise, they turned their eyes from the forest to see before them on the green, a fairy of beauty rare, with soft dark eyes like limpid pools and curling dark brown hair—her robe was soft as Summer's night and shimmered in the blue moonlight, her wings she lifted and held upright, while she spoke in a voice so sweet and light:

The Tower of Loyalty

"I've come from your neighbor Italy to-night, through tunnels black and over snow-capped peaks to bring my

country's gift to you. It is *Beauty* without which no work in Switzerland is wrought!" and sweetly smiling the Fairy flew back to her place on the frond of a fern while the music of the Fairies' applause was heard.

Then came the glance of a falling star and the sound of laughter from the forest a-far, and a voice so clear and full of laughter said:

"I'm so glad to be here."

Down from the top of the tallest Fir tree came a Fairy fair to see.

Her robe was made of
shimmering green
And under her wings, there
could faintly be seen
The shades of red—white
and blue
The colors so true of
America over the sea.

The Tower of Loyalty

Fluttering merrily with a smile and courtesy low, the Fairy said:

"I'm late I know,
But I had far to go,
The waves dashed high
And the ship dipped low.

"I feared I would never
reach here I trow,

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So I flew one night to a
wireless wave
That took me far in the
sky, to a star.
T'was lucky for me, I vow.
For it proved to be their
centennary.
With a star of a rocket they
shot me down
And here I am to say to you,
America sends with out-
stretched hands
Both *Love* and *Friendship*
true."

Drooping her wings with tired grace, the American Fairy sought her place.

Up sprang Max from his mossy seat, he lifted his arms as if to ring. An Elf as quick as a flash the want supplied and Max with a blue-bell in each hand, rang out his glad applause.

The Tower of Loyalty

From the heart of the wild flowers all around came a band of busy, buzzing Bees, and Gnomes so very small dressed in mossy green with pointed caps on which were tiny tinkling bells.

The Bees and the Gnomes served to the guests, honey from every flower that grew,

and bloomed on the mountain-side and vale below, sweet drops of refreshing dew in blue-bell cups they brought and nectar in grains of wheat. To the Fairy guests it seemed to be, in all its sweet simplicity, the truest and finest hospitality.

Creeping over the grass and fern came a company strange to see, they were the Spider-weavers from their pine-needle houses under the trees. The leader, a fat old spider said:

"We've wrought for each

dear Fairy guest to-night a robe of velvety edelweiss, with Alpine roses garlanded and gentian jewel set."

The Tower Loyalty

And one after another of the little mountain-people came to show, in their own way, their welcome to their guests.

The American Fairy exclaimed:

"When beauty and love abound, no wrong or evil can in your hearts be found!"

The man-in-the-moon winked

both his eyes at the little stars gathered 'round.

The Swiss Fairy smiled a sad sweet smile as she said:

"'Tis so,
It should be true."

Then echoing shrill from the Town below came the sound of a crowing cock.
All stopped to listen but Max knew well the sound he heard and sprang to his feet and cried:

"Farewell, dear friends, farewell! At daybreak I must

be back to my post of duty." So, waving his arms, down the mountain-side he rolled over the valley, across the bridge, like a pouf of wind he flew—past Moses who blinked his eyes, to see the Elf flying back to his post at dawn to be.

The Tower of Loyalty

A murmur of welcome passed all around when Max scrambled up the old clock tower, ready to strike the bells that would wake the folk of the old Bern town.

The Cock crowed with joy
"You've done well, my
Boy."

The bears shook with glee
Their comrade back to see.

But Old Father Time
Pointed to the quickly
flowing sand
And bowed his old grey
head in rhyme
To the ringing of the bells.

On a moonlight night,
When the mountain-top
shows clear and bright,
If you have the eyes of faith
—you may see
The Fairies' Tower of
Loyalty.—

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